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1944

Peter Seeger

COMMUNIST PARTY MEMBERSHIP

Harvey Matusow, a witness in public hearings before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, February 6, 1952, testified that he had been a member of the Communist Party from October 1947 to January 1951, and that he had known Peter Seeger to be a member of a Communist Party group in New York City. [Un-American Activities Among Youth Groups (Based on the Testimony of Harvey M. Matusow), February 6 and 7, 1952, pages 2208 and 2277] *

[Note in the reference under TESTIMONY BY SUBJECT, below, that Peter Seeger refused to state in public testimony whether or not he was a member of the Communist Party.]

TESTIMONY BY SUBJECT

Peter Seeger was subpoenaed to testify before the Committee on Un-American Activities, August 18, 1953. When asked if he was a member of the Communist Party, he refused to answer this and numerous other questions about activities in association with cited Communist organizations. [See attachment, "Proceedings Against Peter Seeger," July 13, 1956, which contains Mr. Seeger's testimony.]

It has been alleged that Matusow later recanted this testimony. This is not true. He did attempt to recant testimony he subsequently gave in two Federal prosecutions of Communists. In one case (Jencks), the Court found Matusow's recantation false and, in the other (Flynn), Matusow was convicted of perjury based upon his recantation.

LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

- 1954 As a result of his refusal to answer questions of the committee, Mr. Seeger was cited for contempt of the House of Representatives, July 25, 1956 (See attached reproduction of "Proceedings Against Peter Seeger.")
- 1961 He was convicted by a Grand Jury in the Federal Court of New York, March 29, 1961.
- 1962 His conviction was reversed by the U.S. Court of Appeals, May 18, 1962 on the grounds of procedural errors in the trial in the lower court. [The conviction was reversed not for any error, omission or improper action by the committee in the Seeger hearing or in its citation of him for contempt, but for failure of the indictment returned by the Grand Jury to state that the substantive offense before which he testified had authority to conduct the particular hearing.]
- [Attached are reproductions of two articles dealing with the developments in this matter as follows: New York Times, March 29, 1961, page 20 and the New York Times, May 19, 1962, page 41-41]

The following is pertinent to his testimony in public hearings before the Committee on Un-American Activities on August 18, 1955.

COMMUNIST PARTY ORGANIZATIONS

- 1958 PEOPLE'S WORLD (C-1941;S-1955)
Sent congratulations on its 15th Anniversary (L.A. Edition, People's World, January 4, 1958, page 4)
- 1962 NEW MONTHLY FOR YOUTH (identified as a publication of the Communist Party in the F. B. I. Report for the Fiscal Year 1961)
Granted an interview to a representative of the periodical which was presented, complete and undistorted, in its April-May, 1962 issue, pages 10 and 11 (reproduction of article enclosed).

GENERAL NOTES

- 1954- METROPOLITAN MUSIC SCHOOL (C-1947)
1957 To appear at concert on June 12, 1954 presented by the school, proceeds to go to the school's Scholarship Fund (Daily Worker, June 10, 1954, p. 7)
Instructor [School Catalog for 1953-1954, page 12]
Featured artist at its annual concert series, May 19, 1957, proceeds to go to the school's Scholarship Fund (Daily Worker, official organ of the Communist Party, May 10, 1957, page 7)
- 1956- NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD (C-1944;S-1956)
1957 Furnished entertainment at its 1956 and 1957 conventions (Lawyers Guild Review, publication of the NLG, Spring 1956 issue, page 32, and the National Lawyers Guild 15th Anniversary Convention Program, February 21-24, 1957, page 11)

1957. DOMINANT CIVIL LIBERTIES COMMISSION (T-1954;C-1956)

1957- Scheduled to participate in its conference on January 20, 1957 [Landfill
1958 of the organization]

Accepted its invitation to attend a "Victory Celebration Reception" on
June 14, 1962 [An ad placed by the organization in the National Guardian (C-1956),
June 4, 1962, page 10; also reported in the Communist newspaper, The Worker,
on June 12, 1962, page 6]

Scheduled to participate in a concert at a theatre party arranged by the
ECLC to be held on February 21, 1963, the proceeds to place the organization's
campaign against the McCarran Law [The Worker, January 29, 1963, page 6]

1958 CALIFORNIA LABOR SCHOOL (A-1948;I-1956;S-1937)

One of a group of "lecturers and guest artists" who, in the past, appeared
at a "steady stream of important affairs" at the now closed California Labor
School [A pamphlet of the school entitled, "Come They Did It To Speak-Women,
Now They Do It To School", May 15, 1958, page 6]

1958. NATIONAL COUNCIL OF AMERICAN-SOVIET FRIENDSHIP (A-1947;C-1944;I-1956)

1961. Scheduled to give a concert under the auspices of the Chicago Chapter of
1962 the organization on October 25, 1958 [National Edition of The Worker,
September 21, 1958, page 12]

Scheduled to entertain at a Rally of the organization on November 8, 1960
[Ad in The Worker, placed by the National Council..., October 30, 1960,
page 11]

Entertained at a reception given by the National Council for the Chairman
Titov on the eve of their flight back to the Soviet Union [New World
Review (I-1956;C-1959), June 1962 issue, page 4; and The Worker, May 15,
1962, page 6]

1960- NATIONAL COMMITTEE TO ABOLISH THE UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE (C-1961)

1961 Present among the 34 members of the organization who met at the Taft Hotel
on October 11, 1960 to map plans for nation-wide actions against the Committee
on Un-American Activities [The Worker, October 16, 1960, page 10]

Attended a Rally of the New York Council to Abolish the House Un-American
Activities on April 21, 1961 [The Worker, April 20, 1961, page 10; Interhead
of the Rally to Abolish..., dated April 21, 1961; and The Worker, April 15,
1961, page 10]

Was on the platform and sang at a rally of the organization to abolish ECLC
which also urged amnesty for Frank Wilkinson and Carl Braden, convicted for
conspiracy of Congress (their convictions were upheld by the Supreme Court in
opinion handed down February 27, 1961). [Abolition, a publication of the New
York Council to Abolish..., November 1961, page inside 6; The Worker,
November 26, page 8, and December 3, 1961, page 9; and the National Guardian,
December 16, 1961, page 3]

1961. NATIONAL GUARDIAN (C-1956)

1964 Entertained at its picnic on September 16, 1961 [National Guardian, August 21,
page 6, August 22, page 5, and September 25, 1961, page 6]

Scheduled to entertain on the "Guardian Back Ride," on June 22, 1961
[National Guardian, May 22, page 5, June 5, page 3 and June 12, 1961, page 3]

Scheduled to entertain at the annual Guardian picnic, September 19, 1964,
Hummelster [Ad, "Picnic with Kids", August 31, 1964, page 5, August 22,
page 4, August 23, page 5, September 1, page 4, September 17, page 3, and
September 19, 1964, page 5, issues of the National Guardian]

1961- VETERANS OF THE AMERICAN LINCOLN BRIGADE (A-1947;C-1944)
1962

Decorated staff of the American Lincoln Brigade which were offered for sale by the Guardian Bookings Service [National Guardian, July 26, 1961, page 8]

Participated at its rally on February 19, 1961 which was also a demonstration against the McCarran Act. The money collected was to be used in the fight against the Justice Department to keep the organization from registering as a "Communist front" as ordered by Attorney General Robert Kennedy. [The Worker, March 4, 1962, page 12; National Guardian, February 12, 1961, page 10; The Worker, February 4 and 13, 1961, pages 9 and 2 respectively, and a handbill of the organization]

1962 6th WORLD YOUTH FESTIVAL, HELSINKI, FINLAND (Communist dominated)

Scheduled to lead a "Folk and Jazz Concert" to raise funds for the U.S. Festival Committee on April 25, 1962, the proceeds to be used to help send representatives to the Festival. [The Worker, April 26, 1962; an ad in the National Guardian, April 16, 1962, page 11, placed by the U.S. Festival Committee]

PROCEEDINGS AGAINST PETER SEEGER

July 25, 1956 - Ordered to be printed

Mr. Walter, from the Committee on Un-American Activities
submitted the following

R e p o r t

Citing Peter Seeger

The Committee on Un-American Activities, as created and authorized by the House of Representatives through the enactment of Public Law 601, section 121, subsection (q) (2) of the 79th Congress, and under House Resolution 5 of the 84th Congress, caused to be issued a subpoena to Peter Seeger. The said subpoena directed Peter Seeger to be and appear before said Committee on Un-American Activities, or a duly authorized subcommittee thereof, of the House of Representatives of the United States, of which the Honorable Francis E. Walter is Chairman, in their chamber, room 1703, United States courthouse, Foley Square, New York City, N. Y., on August 18, 1955, at the hour of 10:00 a.m., then and there to testify touching matters of inquiry committed to said committee; and not to depart without leave of said committee. The subpoena served upon Peter Seeger is set forth in words and figures as follows:

United States of America,
Congress of the United States.

To Pete Seeger, Route 9-D, Beacon, New York, Greeting:

Pursuant to lawful authority, you are hereby commanded to be and appear before the Committee on Un-American Activities of the House of Representatives of the United States, or a duly appointed subcommittee thereof, on 18 August, 1955, at 10:00 o'clock a.m., at their Committee Room, 1703 U. S. Court House, Foley Square, New York City, N. Y., then and there to testify touching matters of inquiry committed to said committee, and not to depart without leave of said committee.

Hereof fail not, as you will answer your default under the pains and penalties in such cases made and provided.

To United States Marshal, NYC, N.Y., to serve and return.

Given under my hand this 1st day of July, in the year of our Lord, 1955.

FRANCIS E. WALTER, Chairman

The said subpoena was duly served as appears by the return made thereon by John F. Pickett, Deputy United States Marshal, southern district of New York, who was duly authorized to serve the said subpoena. The return of the service by the said John F. Pickett, being endorsed thereon, is set forth in words and figures as follows:

Received this writ at New York, N.Y., on July 12, 1955, and on July 14, 1955, at Route 9-D, Beacon, New York, I served it on the within-named Pete Seeger by leaving the original thereof with him.

Thomas J. Lunney
U.S. Marshal, SDNY.
By: John F. Pickett,
Deputy U.S. Marshal, SDNY.

The said Peter Seeger, pursuant to said subpoena, and in compliance therewith, appeared before a duly constituted subcommittee of the Committee on Un-American Activities on August 18, 1955, to give such testimony as required under and by virtue of Public Law 601, section 121, subsection (q) (2) of the 79th Congress, and under House Resolution 5 of the 84th Congress. The said Peter Seeger having appeared as a witness and having been asked the questions; namely:

May I ask you whether or not the Allerton Section was a section of the Communist Party?

Did you take part in this May Day program under the auspices of the music section of the cultural division of the Communist Party?

Did you sing this particular song on the Fourth of July at Wingdale Lodge in New York?

Were you chosen by Mr. Elliott Sullivan to take part in the program on the weekend of July Fourth at Wingdale Lodge?

Did you take part in that performance?

Have you been a member of the Communist Party since 1947?

Will you examine it please and state whether or not that is a photograph of you?

It is noted that the individual mentioned is wearing a military uniform. That was in May of 1952, and the statute of limitations would have run by now as to any offense for the improper wearing of the uniform, and will you tell the committee whether or not you took part in that May Day program wearing a uniform of an American soldier?

Did you also teach at the Jefferson School of Social Science here in the city of New York?

Are you a member of the Communist Party now?

which questions were pertinent to the subject under inquiry, refused to answer said questions, and as a result of said Peter Seeger's refusal to answer the aforesaid questions, your committee was prevented from receiving testimony and information concerning a matter committed to said committee in accordance with the terms of the subpoena upon said Peter Seeger.

The record of the proceedings before the subcommittee on August 18, 1955, during which the said Peter Seeger refused to answer the aforesaid questions pertaining to the subject under inquiry, is set forth in fact as follows:

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE
COMMITTEE ON UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES
New York, N. Y., Thursday, August 18, 1955.

PUBLIC HEARING

A subcommittee of the Committee on Un-American Activities met at 10 a.m., pursuant to recess, in room 1703 of the Federal Building, Foley Square, New York, N. Y., the Honorable Francis E. Walter (chairman) presiding.

Committee members present: Representatives Walter, Willis, and Scherer.

Staff members present: Frank S. Tavenner, Jr., Counsel; Donald T. Appell and Frank Bonora, investigators; and Thomas W. Beale, Sr., Chief Clerk.

Chairman Walter. The Committee will be in order.

(After the completion of the testimony of several other witnesses, Mr. Peter Seeger was called as a witness.)

Chairman Walter. Will you call your next witness, Mr. Tavenner?

Mr. Tavenner. Mr. Peter Seeger, will you come forward, please sir?

Chairman Walter. Do you swear that the testimony you are about to give will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Mr. Seeger. I do, sir.

TESTIMONY OF PETER SEEGER, ACCOMPANIED BY HIS COUNSEL,
PAUL L. ROSS

Mr. Tavenner. You are Mr. Peter-Seeger?

Mr. Seeger. That is my name.

Mr. Tavenner. Will you spell your last name, please?

Mr. Seeger. S-e-e-g-e-r.

Mr. Tavenner. Will Counsel accompanying the witness please identify himself for the record?

Mr. Ross. Paul L. Ross, New York City.

Mr. Tavenner. When and where were you born, Mr. Seeger?

Mr. Seeger. I was born in New York in 1919.

Mr. Tavenner. What is your profession or occupation?

Mr. Seeger. Well, I have worked at many things, and my main profession is a student of American folklore, and I make my living as a banjo picker, sort of damming in some people's opinion.

Mr. Tavenner. Has New York been your headquarters for a considerable period of time?

Mr. Seeger. No, I lived here only rarely until I left school and after a year or two or a few years living here after World War II, I got back to the country where I always felt more at home.

Mr. Tavenner. You say that you were in the Armed Forces of the United States?

Mr. Seeger. About three and a half years.

Mr. Tavenner. Will you tell us please the period of your service?

Mr. Seeger. I went in in July 1942, and I was mustered out in December of 1945.

Mr. Tavenner. Did you attain the rank of an officer?

Mr. Seeger. No. After about a year I made Pfc, and just before I got out I got to be T-5, which is the equivalent of a corporal's rating, a long hard pull.

Mr. Tavenner. Did you become a member of the Reserves?

Mr. Seeger. No, I did not.

* * * *

Mr. Tavenner. Mr. Seeger, prior to your entry into the service in 1942, were you engaged in the practice of your profession in the area of New York?

Mr. Seeger. It is hard to call it a profession. I kind of drifted into it and I never intended to be a musician, and I am glad I am one now, and it is a very honorable profession, but when I started out actually I wanted to be a newspaperman, and when I left school----

Chairman Walter. Will you answer the question, please?

Mr. Seeger. I have to explain that it really wasn't my profession. I picked up a little change in it.

Chairman Walter. Is it your profession?

Mr. Seeger. It is my profession.

* * * *

Mr. Tavenner. The committee has information obtained in part from the Daily Worker, indicating that over a period of time, especially since December of 1945, you took part in numerous entertainment features.

I have before me a photostatic copy of the June 20, 1947 issue of the Daily Worker. In a column entitled "What's On", appears this advertisement:

Tonight--Bronx, hear Peter Seeger and his guitar, at Allerton Section housewarming.

May I ask you whether or not the Allerton Section was a section of the Communist Party?

Mr. Seeger. Sir, I refuse to answer that question whether it was a quote from the New York Times or the Vegetarian Journal.

Mr. Tavenner. I don't believe there is any more authoritative document in regard to the Communist Party than its official organ, the Daily Worker.

Mr. Scherer. He hasn't answered the question, and he merely said he wouldn't answer whether the article appeared in the New York Times or some other magazine. I ask you to direct the witness to answer the question.

Chairman Walter. I direct you to answer.

Mr. Seeger. Sir, the whole line of questioning-----

Chairman Walter. You have only been asked one question, so far.

Mr. Seeger. I am not going to answer any questions as to my associations, my philosophical or religious beliefs or my political beliefs, or how I voted in any election or any of these private affairs. I think these are very improper questions for any American to be asked, especially under such compulsion as this.

I would be very glad to tell you my life if you want to hear of it.

Mr. Tavenner. Has the witness declined to answer this specific question?

Chairman Walter. He said that he is not going to answer any questions, any names or things.

Mr. Scherer. He was directed to answer the question.

Chairman Walter. Yes.

Mr. Tavenner. I desire to offer the document in evidence and ask that it be marked "Seeger Exhibit No. 1", for identification only.

Chairman Walter. Mark it and let it be received.

Mr. Tavenner. I have before me a photostatic copy of the April 30, 1948 issue of the Daily Worker which carries under the same title of "What's C ", and advertisement of a "May Day Rally: For Peace, Security and Democracy". The advertisement states:

Are you in a fighting mood? Then attend the May Day rally.

Expert speakers are stated to be slated for the program, and then follows a statement, "Entertainment by Pete Seeger". At the bottom appears this: "Auspices Essex County Communist Party", and at the top, "Tonight, Newark, N.J."

Did you lend your talent to the Essex County Communist Party on the occasion indicated by this article from the Daily Worker?

Mr. Seeger. Mr. Walter, I believe I have already answered this question, and the same answer.

Mr. Walter. The same answer. In other words, you mean that you decline to answer because of the reasons stated before?

Mr. Seeger. I gave my answer, sir.

Chairman Walter. What is your answer?

Mr. Seeger. You see, sir, I feel-----

Chairman Walter. What is your answer?

Mr. Seeger. I will tell you what my answer is.
(Witness consulted with counsel.)

Mr. Seeger. I feel that in my whole life I have never done anything of any conspiratorial nature and I resent very much and very deeply the implication of being called before this committee that in some way because my opinions may be different from yours, or yours, Mr. Willis; or yours, Mr. Scherer; that I am any less of an American than anybody else. I love my country very deeply, sir.

Chairman Walter. Why don't you make a little contribution toward preserving its institutions?

Mr. Seeger. I feel that my whole life is a contribution, that is why I would like to tell you about it.

Chairman Walter. I don't want to hear about it.

Mr. Scherer. I think that there must be a direction to answer.

Chairman Walter. I direct you to answer that question.

Mr. Seeger. I have already given you my answer, sir.

Mr. Scherer. Let me understand. You are not relying on the fifth amendment, are you?

Mr. Seeger. No sir, although I do not want to in any way discredit or depreciate or deplete the witnesses that have used the fifth amendment and I simply feel it is improper for this committee to ask such questions.

Mr. Scherer. And then in answering the rest of the questions, or in refusing to answer the rest of the questions, I understand that you are not relying on the fifth amendment as a basis for your refusal to answer?

Mr. Seeger. No, I am not, sir.

Mr. Tavenner. I desire to offer the document in evidence and ask that it be marked "Seeger Exhibit No. 2", for identification only.

Chairman Walter. Mark it and let it be received.

Mr. Tavenner. I have before me a photostatic copy of the May 4, 1949, issue of the Daily Worker, which has an article entitled "May Day Smash Review Put on by Communist Cultural Division, On Stage", and the article was written by Bob Reed. This article emphasizes a production called Now is the Time, and it says this:

Now is the Time was a hard hitting May Day show of songs and knife-edged satire. New songs and film strips walloped the enemies of the people in what the singers called "Aesopian language".

Then there is bracketed off in the article this paragraph:

Now is the Time was a hard hitting May Day show of songs and knife-edged music section of the cultural division of the Communist Party. Script by Lee Hays.

And other persons, including Peter Seeger. Lee Hays is recited to be the MC, or master of ceremonies.

Did you take part in this May Day program under the auspices of the music section of the cultural division of the Communist Party?

Mr. Seeger. Mr. Chairman, the answer is the same as before.

Mr. Scherer. I think we have to have a direction.

Mr. Walter. I direct you to answer the question.

Mr. Seeger. I have given you my answer, sir.

Mr. Tavenner. The article contains another paragraph as follows:

This performance of Now is the Time was given in honor of the 12 indicted Communist Party leaders.

And then it continues with Bob Reed's account of the show:

This reviewer has never seen a show which stirred its audience more. Add up new material, fine personal and group performances, overwhelming audience response--the result was a significant advance in the people's cultural movement. Now is the Time is that rare phenomenon, a political show in which performers and audience had a lot of fun. It should be repeated for large audiences.

Mr. Lee Hays was asked the question while he was on the witness stand as to whether or not he wrote that play and he refused to answer. Do you know whether he was the originator of the script?

Mr. Seeger. Do I know whether he was the originator of the script? Again my answer is the same. However, if you want to question me about any songs, I would be glad to tell you, sir.

Chairman Walter. That is what you are being asked about now.

Mr. Tavenner. All right, I will ask you, but I would like to introduce that document in evidence and ask it to be marked "Seeger Exhibit No. 3", for identification only and to be made a part of the committee files.

Chairman Walter. Mark it and let it be received.

Mr. Tavenner. You said that you would tell us about the songs. Did you participate in a program at Wingdale Lodge in the State of New York, which is a summer camp for adults and children, on the weekend of July Fourth of this year?

(Witness consulted with counsel.)

Mr. Seeger. Again, I say I will be glad to tell what songs I have ever sung, because singing is my business.

Mr. Tavenner. I am going to ask you.

Mr. Seeger. But I decline to say who has ever listened to them, who has written them, or other people who have sung them.

Mr. Tavenner. Did you sing this song, to which we have referred, "Now Is the Time", at Wingdale Lodge on the weekend of July Fourth?

Mr. Seeger. I don't know any song by that name, and I know a song with a similar name. It is called Wasn't That a Time. Is that the song?

Chairman Walter. Did you sing that song?

Mr. Seeger. I can sing it, and I don't know how well I can do it without my banjo.

Chairman Walter. I said, did you sing it on that occasion?

Mr. Seeger. I have sung that song, and I am not going to go into where I have sung it. I have sung it many places.

Chairman Walter. Did you sing it on this particular occasion? That is what you are being asked.

Mr. Seeger. Again my answer is the same.

Chairman Walter. You said that you would tell us about it.

Mr. Seeger. I will tell you about the songs, but I am not going to tell you or try to explain---

Chairman Walter. I direct you to answer the question. Did you sing this particular song on the Fourth of July at Wingdale Lodge in New York?

Mr. Seeger. I have already given you my answer to that question, and all questions such as that. I feel that is improper to ask about my associations and opinions. I have said that I would be voluntarily glad to tell you any song, or what I have done in my life.

Chairman Walter. I think it is my duty to inform you that we don't accept this answer and the others, and I give you an opportunity now to answer these questions, particularly the last one.

Mr. Seeger. Sir, my answer is always the same.

Chairman Walter. All right, go ahead, Mr. Tavenner.

Mr. Tavenner. Were you chosen by Mr. Elliott Sullivan to take part in the program on the weekend of July Fourth at Wingdale Lodge?

Mr. Seeger. The answer is the same, sir.

Mr. Willis. Was that the occasion of the satire on the Constitution and the Bill of Rights?

Mr. Tavenner. The same occasion, yes, sir.

I have before me a photostatic copy of a page from the June 1, 1949 issue of the Daily Worker, and in a column entitled "Town Talk", there is found this statement:

The first performance of a new song If I Had a Hammer, on the theme of the Foley Square trial of the Communist leaders, will be given at a testimonial dinner for the 12 on Friday night at St. Nicholas Arena***. Among those on hand for the singing will be***Pete Seeger, and Lee Hays--

and others whose names are mentioned.

Did you take part in that performance?

Mr. Seeger. I shall be glad to answer about the song, sir, and I am not interested in carrying on the line of questioning about where I have sung any songs.

Mr. Tavenner. I ask a direction.

Chairman Walter. You may not be interested, but we are, however. I direct you to answer. You can answer that question.

Mr. Seeger. I feel these questions are improper, sir, and I feel they are immoral to ask any American this kind of question.

Mr. Tavenner. Have you finished your answer?

Mr. Seeger. Yes, sir.

Mr. Tavenner. I desire to offer the document in evidence and ask that it be marked "Seeger Exhibit No. 4", for identification only and to be made a part of the committee files.

Mr. Seeger. I am sorry you are not interested in the song. It is a good song.

Mr. Tavenner. Were you present in the hearing room while the former witnesses testified?

Mr. Seeger. I have been here all morning; yes sir.

Mr. Tavenner. I assume then that you heard me read the testimony of Mr. Kazan about the purpose of the Communist Party in having its actors entertain for the benefit of Communist fronts and the Communist Party. Did you hear that testimony?

Mr. Seeger. Yes; I have hear all of the testimony today.

Mr. Tavenner. Did you hear Mr. George Hall's testimony yesterday in which he stated that as an actor, the special contribution that he was expected to make to the Communist Party was to use his talents by entertaining at Communist Party functions? Did you hear that testimony?

Mr. Seeger. I didn't hear it; no.

Mr. Tavenner. It is a fact that he so testified. I want to know whether or not you were engaged in a similar type of service to the Communist Party in entertaining at these features.

(Witness consulted with counsel.)

Mr. Seeger. I have sung for Americans of every political persuasion, and I am proud that I never refuse to sing to an audience, no matter what religion or color of their skin, or situation of life. I have sung in hobo jungles, and I have sung for the Rockefellers, and I am proud that I have never refused to sing for anybody. That is the only answer I can give along that line.

Chairman Walter. Mr. Tavenner, are you getting around to that letter? There was a letter introduced yesterday that I think was of greater importance than any bit of evidence adduced at these hearings, concerning the attempt made to influence people in this professional performers guild and union to assist a purely Communist cause which had no relation whatsoever to the arts and the theater. Is that what you are leading up to?

Mr. Tavenner. Yes; it is. That was the letter of Peter Lawrence, which I questioned him about yesterday. That related to the trial of the Smith Act defendants here at Foley Square. I am trying to inquire now whether this witness was party to the same type of propaganda effort by the Communist Party.

Mr. Scherer. There has been no answer to your last question.

Mr. Tavenner. That is right; may I have a direction?

Mr. Seeger. Would you repeat the question? I don't even know what the last question was, and I thought I have answered all of them up to now.

Mr. Tavenner. What you stated was not in response to the question.

Chairman Walter. Proceed with the questioning, Mr. Tavenner.

Mr. Tavenner. I believe, Mr. Chairman, with your permission, I will have the question read to him. I think it should be put in exactly the same form.

(Whereupon the reporter read the pending question as above recorded.)

Mr. Seeger. "These features"; what do you mean? Except for the answer I have already given you, I have no answer. The answer I gave you, you have, don't you? That is that I am proud that I have sung for every American, Americans of every political persuasion, and I have never refused to sing for anybody because I disagreed with their political opinion, and I am proud of the fact that my songs seem to cut across and find perhaps a unifying thing, basic humanity, and that is why I would love to be able to tell you about these songs, because I feel that you would agree with me more, sir. I know many beautiful songs from your home country, Carbon, and Monroe, and I hitchhiked through there and stayed in the homes of miners.

Mr. Tavenner. You are getting away from the question. My question was whether or not you sang at these functions of the Communist Party. You have answered it inferentially, and if I understood your answer, you are saying you did.

Mr. Seeger. Except for that answer, I decline to answer further.

Mr. Tavenner. Did you sing at functions of the Communist Party, at Communist Party requests?

Mr. Seeger. I believe, sir, that a good 20 minutes ago, I gave my answer to this whole line of questioning.

Mr. Tavenner. Yes; but you have now beclouded your answer by your statement, and I want to make certain what you mean. Did you sing at the Communist Party functions which I have asked you about, as a Communist Party duty?

Mr. Seeger. I have already indicated that I am not interested, and I feel it is improper to say who has sung my songs or who I have sung them to, especially under such compulsion as this.

Mr. Tavenner. Have you been a member of the Communist Party since 1947?

(Witness consulted with counsel.)

Mr. Seeger. The same answer, sir.

Chairman Walter. I direct you to answer that question.

Mr. Seeger. I must give the same answer as before.

Mr. Tavenner. I have a throwaway sheet entitled "Culture Fights Back, 1953", showing entertainment at the Capitol Hotel, Carnival Room, 51st Street at 8th Avenue, in 1953, sponsored by the Committee to Defend V. J. Jerome. It indicates that Pete Seeger was one of those furnishing the entertainment. Will you tell the committee, please, whether or not you were asked to perform on that occasion, and whether or not you did, either as a Communist Party directive, or as what you considered to be a duty of the Communist Party.

Mr. Seeger. I believe I have answered this already.

Mr. Tavenner. Are you acquainted with V. J. Jerome?

Mr. Seeger. I have already told you sir, that I believe my associations, whatever they are, are my own private affairs.

Mr. Tavenner. You did know, at that time, in 1953, that V. J. Jerome was a cultural head of the Communist Party and one of the Smith Act defendants in New York City?

Mr. Seeger. Again the same answer, sir.

Mr. Scherer. You refuse to answer that question?

Mr. Seeger. Yes, sir.

Chairman Walter. That is understood.

Mr. Tavenner. I desire to offer the document in evidence and ask that it be marked "Seeger Exhibit No. 5" for identification only.

Chairman Walter. It will be so marked and received.

Mr. Tavenner. I hand you a photograph which was taken of the May Day parade in New York City in 1952, which shows the front rank of a group of individuals, and one is in a uniform with military cap and insignia, and carrying a placard entitled "Censored".

Will you examine it please and state whether or not that is a photograph of you?

(A document was handed to the witness.)

Mr. Seeger. It is like Jesus Christ when asked by Pontius Pilate, "Are you king of the Jews?"

Chairman Walter. Stop that.

Mr. Seeger. Let someone else identify that picture.

Mr. Scherer. I ask that he be directed to answer the question.

Chairman Walter. I direct you to answer the question.

Mr. Seeger. The question--"Do I identify this photograph?"

Chairman Walter. Yes.

Mr. Seeger. I say let someone else identify it.

Mr. Tavenner. I desire to offer the document in evidence and ask that it be marked "Seeger Exhibit No. 6".¹

¹ See Lee exhibit No. 1.

Chairman Walter. Make it a part of the record.

(Witness consulted with counsel.)

Mr. Tavenner. It is noted that the individual mentioned is wearing a military uniform. That was in May of 1952, and the statute of limitations would have run by now as to any offense for the improper wearing of the uniform, and will you tell the committee whether or not you took part in that May Day program wearing a uniform of an American soldier?

Mr. Seeger. The same answer as before, sir.

Chairman Walter. I direct you to answer that question.

(Witness consulted with counsel.)

Mr. Scherer. I think the record should show that the witness remains mute, following the direction by the chairman to answer that question.

Mr. Seeger. The same answer, sir, as before.

Mr. Scherer. Again I understand that you are not invoking the fifth amendment?

Mr. Seeger. That is correct.

Mr. Scherer. We are not accepting the answers or the reasons you gave.

Mr. Seeger. That is your prerogative, sir.

Mr. Scherer. Do you understand it is the feeling of the committee that you are in contempt as a result of the position you take?

Mr. Seeger. I can't say.

Mr. Scherer. I am telling you that that is the position of the committee.

Mr. Tavenner. The Daily Worker of April 21, 1948, at page 7, contains a notice that Pete Seeger was a participant in an affair for Ferdinand Smith. Will you tell the committee what the occasion was at which you took part?

Mr. Seeger. I hate to waste the committee's time, but I think surely you must realize by now that my answer is the same.

Mr. Tavenner. Do you know whether Ferdinand Smith was under deportation orders at that time?

Mr. Seeger. My answer is the same as before, sir.

Mr. Tavenner. I think that he was not under deportation orders until a little later than that.

Chairman Walter. What is his name?

Mr. Tavenner. Ferdinand Smith, a Communist Party member and former vice president of the maritime union.

My purpose in asking you these questions, Mr. Seeger, is to determine whether or not, in accordance with the plan of the Communist Party as outlined by Mr. Kazan and Mr. George Hall, you were performing a valuable service to the Communist Party, and if that was the way they attempted to use you.

Mr. Seeger. Is that a question, sir?

Mr. Tavenner. That is my explanation to you, with the hope that you will give the committee some light on that subject.

Mr. Seeger. No; my answer is the same as before.

Mr. Tavenner. Did you also perform and entertain at various functions held by front organizations such as the American Youth for Democracy? I have here photostatic copies of the Daily Worker indicating such programs were conducted in Detroit in 1952, at Greenwich Village, on May 10, 1947, and again at another place in March of 1948.

Did you entertain at functions under the auspices of the American Youth for Democracy?

(Witness consulted with counsel.)

Mr. Seeger. The answer is the same, and I take it that you are not interested in all of the different places that I have sung, and why don't you ask me about the churches and schools and other places?

Mr. Tavenner. That is very laudable, indeed, and I wish only that your activities had been confined to those areas.

If you were acting for the Communist Party at these functions, we want to know it. We want to determine just what the Communist Party plan was.

Mr. Scherer. Witness, you have indicated that you are perfectly willing to tell us about all of these innumerable functions at which you entertained, but why do you refuse to tell us about the functions that Mr. Tavenner inquires about?

Mr. Seeger. No, sir, I said that I should be glad to tell you about all of the songs that I have sung, because I feel that the songs are the clearest explanation of what I do believe in, as a musician, and as an American.

Mr. Scherer. Didn't you just say that you sang before various religious groups, school groups?

Mr. Seeger. I have said it and I will say it again, and I have sung for perhaps---

(Witness consulted with counsel.)

Mr. Scherer. You are willing to tell us about those groups?

Mr. Seeger. I am saying voluntarily that I have sung for almost every religious group in the country, from Jewish and Catholic, and Presbyterian and Holy Rollers and Revival Churches, and I do this voluntarily. I have sung for many, many different groups, and it is hard for perhaps one person to believe, I was looking back over the 20 years or so that I have sung around these 48 states, that I have sung in so many different places.

Mr. Scherer. Did you sing before the groups that Mr. Tavenner asked you about?

Mr. Seeger. I am saying that my answer is the same as before. I have told you that I sung for everybody.

Chairman Walter. Wait a minute. You sung for everybody. Then are we to believe or to take it that you sang at the places Mr. Tavenner mentioned?

Mr. Seeger. My answer is the same as before.

Chairman Walter. What is that?

Mr. Seeger. It seems to me like the third time I have said it, if not the fourth.

Chairman Walter. Maybe it is the fifth, but say it again, and I want to know what your answer is.

(Witness consulted with counsel.)

Mr. Seeger. I decline to discuss, under compulsion, where I have sung, and who has sung my songs, that I have helped to write as well as to sing them, and who else has sung with me, and the people I have known. I love my country very dearly and I greatly resent this implication that because some of the places that I have sung and some of the people that I have known, and some of my opinions, whether they are religious or philosophical, or I might be a vegetarian, making me any less of an American. I will tell you about my songs, but I am not interested in telling you who wrote them and I will tell you about my songs, and I am not interested in who listened to them.

Mr. Tavenner. According to the Daily Worker there was a conference program of the Civil Rights Congress on April 2, 1949, at which you were one of the performers.

On August 27, 1949, the People's Artists presented a summer musicale at Lakeland Acres picnic grounds, Peekskill, N.Y., for the benefit of the Harlem chapter of the Civil Rights Congress, at which you were a participant.

At another meeting of the Civil Rights Congress of New York, around May 11, 1946, you were a participant.

Will you tell the committee, please, under what circumstances you performed, because you have said that you sang at all sorts of meetings, and now under what circumstances were your services acquired on those occasions?

Mr. Seeger. My answer is the same as before, sir. I can only infer from your lack of interest in my songs that you are actually scared to know what these songs are like, because there is nothing wrong with my songs, sir. Do you know---

Mr. Scherer. You said you want to talk about your songs, and I will give you an opportunity. Tell us what songs you sang at Communist Party meetings?

Mr. Seeger. I will tell you about the songs that I have sung anyplace.

Mr. Scherer. I want to know the ones that you sang at Communist Party meetings, because those are the songs about which we can inquire. Just tell us one song that you sang at a Communist Party meeting.

Mr. Seeger. Mr. Scherer, it seems to me that you heard my testimony and that is a ridiculous question, because you know what my answer is.

Mr. Tavenner. Mr. George Hall testified that the entertainment that he engaged in at the instance of the Communist Party, and for the Communist Party were not songs of a political character. He did say, however, that he was expected by the Communist Party to perform in order to raise money for the Communist Party.

Now, did you, as Mr. Hall did, perform in order to raise money for Communist Party causes?

(Witness consulted with counsel.)

Mr. Seeger. I don't care what Mr. Hall says, and my answer is the same as before, sir.

Mr. Tavenner. That you refuse to answer?

Mr. Seeger. I have given my answer.

Mr. Scherer. Was Mr. Hall telling the truth when he told the committee about the entertainment he engaged in at the instance of the Communist Party?

Mr. Seeger. I don't feel like discussing what Mr. Hall said.

Mr. Tavenner. The American Committee for Yugoslav Relief has been designated as a front organization. According to the October 22, 1947, issue of the Daily People's World, in California, Pete Seeger headed the list of entertainers to appear at a picnic given by the Southern California chapter of that organization. Did you participate in that program?

Mr. Seeger. If you have 100 more photostats there, it seems silly for me to give you the same answer 100 more times.

Mr. Tavenner. What is your answer?

Mr. Seeger. It is the same as before, sir.

Mr. Tavenner. There are various peace groups in the country which have utilized your services, are there not?

Mr. Seeger. I have sung for pacifists and I have sung for soldiers.

Mr. Tavenner. According to the Daily Worker of September 6, 1940, you were scheduled as a singer at a mass meeting of American Peace Mobilization at Turner's Arena, in Washington, D. C.

What were the circumstances under which you were requested to take part in that performance?

Mr. Seeger. My answer is the same as before, sir.

Mr. Tavenner. You were a member of the American Peace Mobilization, were you not?

Mr. Seeger. My answer is the same as before.

Mr. Tavenner. Were you not a delegate to the Chicago convention of the American Peace Mobilization on September 5, 1940?

Mr. Seeger. My answer is the same as before.

Chairman Walter. Is that organization subversive?

Mr. Tavenner. Yes.

Chairman Walter. What is the name of it?

Mr. Tavenner. American Peace Mobilization, and it was the beginning of these peace organizations, back in 1940.

Did you take part in the American Peace Crusade program in Chicago, in April of 1954?

Mr. Seeger. My answer is the same as before. Of course, I would be curious to know what you think of a song like this very great Negro spiritual, I'm Gonna Lay Down My Sword and Shield, Down By the Riverside.

Mr. Tavenner. That is not at all responsive to my question.

Mr. Seeger. I gave you my answer before I even said that.

Mr. Tavenner. If you refuse to answer, I think that you should not make a speech.

(Witness consulted with counsel.)

Mr. Tavenner. Did you also perform a service for the California Labor School in Los Angeles by putting on musical programs there?

Mr. Seeger. My answer is the same as before, sir.

Mr. Tavenner. Did you teach in the California Labor School?

Mr. Seeger. My answer is the same as before, sir.

Mr. Scherer. I think for the record you should state whether the California Labor School has been cited.

Mr. Tavenner. It has.

Mr. Scherer. As subversive and Communist dominated?

Mr. Tavenner. Yes, it has been.

(Witness consulted with counsel.)

Mr. Tavenner. Did you also teach at the Jefferson School of Social Science here in the city of New York?

Mr. Seeger. My answer is the same as before, sir.

Mr. Scherer. I ask that you direct him to answer.

Chairman Walter. I direct you to answer. Did you teach at the Jefferson School here at New York?

Mr. Seeger. I feel very silly having to repeat the same thing over and over again, but my answer is exactly the same as before, sir.

Chairman Walter. Has the Jefferson School of Social Science been cited?

Mr. Tavenner. Yes, and it has been required to register under the 1950 Internal Security Act.

Mr. Scherer. There are a number of people here who taught at that school, Mr. Walter.

Mr. Tavenner. I desire to offer in evidence a photostatic copy of an article from the September 21, 1946 issue of the Daily Worker which refers to music courses at Jefferson School, and I call attention to the last sentence in the article wherein the name, Peter Seeger is mentioned as a leader in one of the courses.

I ask that it be marked "Seeger Exhibit No. 7".

Chairman Walter. It is received and so marked.

Why don't you insert it in the record at this point, because there can be no objection to inserting it.

Mr. Tavenner. I insert it in the record at this point.

Seeger Exhibit No. 7

(Daily Worker, New York, Saturday, September 21, 1946)

Music Courses at Jefferson School

Three new courses in music will be offered by the Jefferson School of Social Science, 575 Avenue of the Americas, for the fall term beginning Sept. 30.

The music of Beethoven, a series of 10 Tuesday evening forums, with records and discussions, of representative works of the great creative epochs of Beethoven's life, will be led by Irwin Freundlich. Mr. Freundlich is on the faculty of the Julliard School of Music.

Horace Grenell, president of Young People's Records, will lead a workshop course in Creating Music.

A People's Songs Workshop, under the supervision of Waldemar Hille, former professor of music at Elmhurst College, will offer practical sessions in writing new songs and in selecting and editing songs for publication. The workshop leaders will include Herbert Haufrecht, Peter Seeger, Lee Hayes, and others.

According to the March 18, 1948 issue of the Daily Worker, it is indicated that you would entertain at a musical presented by the Jefferson Workers Book Shop. According to the November 25, 1948 issue of the same paper you would perform also under the auspices of the Jefferson School of Social Science. Also you were a participant in a program advertised in the Daily Worker of June 1, 1950, put on by the Jefferson School of Social Science, and according to an issue of February 15, 1954, of the same paper, you were expected to play and lecture on songs and ballads in the Jefferson School.

Will you tell the committee, please, what were the circumstances under which you engaged in those programs, if you did?

Mr. Seeger. My answer is the same as before, sir.

Mr. Tavenner. Did you also engage in performances for the Labor Youth League in 1954?

Mr. Seeger. My answer is the same as before. Do you think that I sing propaganda songs or something?

Mr. Tavenner. In 1947, what was your connection with an organization known as People's Songs?

(Witness consulted with counsel.)

Mr. Seeger. I take the same answer as before regarding any organization or any association I have.

Chairman Walter. What was People's Songs, Mr. Tavenner.

Mr. Tavenner. People's Songs was an organization which, according to its issue of February and March 1947, was composed of a number of persons on the board of directors who have been called before this committee or identified by this committee as members of the Communist Party, and the purpose of which, from information made available to the committee, was to extend services to the Communist Party in its entertainment projects.

Mr. Lee Hays was a member of the board of directors, was he not, along with you, in this organization?

(Witness consulted with counsel.)

Mr. Seeger. My answer is the same as before, sir.

Mr. Tavenner. Were you not the editor of People's Songs, and a member of the board of directors in 1947?

Mr. Seeger. My answer is the same as before.

Mr. Tavenner. You were actually the national director of this organization, were you not?

Mr. Seeger. My answer is the same as before.

Mr. Tavenner. Was the organization founded by Alan Lomax?

Mr. Seeger. My answer is the same as before.

Mr. Tavenner. Was the booking agent of People's Songs, an organization known as People's Artists?

Mr. Seeger. My answer is the same.

Mr. Tavenner. Will you tell the committee please whether or not during the weekend of July 4, 1955, you were a member of the Communist Party?

Mr. Seeger. My answer is the same as before, sir.

Mr. Tavenner. Were you a member of the Communist Party at any time during the various entertainment features in which you were alleged to have engaged?

Mr. Seeger. My answer is the same.

Mr. Tavenner. Are you a member of the Communist Party now?

Mr. Seeger. My answer is the same.

Mr. Scherer. I ask for a direction on that question.

Chairman Walter. I direct you to answer.

Mr. Seeger. My answer is the same as before.

Mr. Tavenner. I have no further questions, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Walter. The witness is excused.

The Committee will stand in recess until 2:00 o'clock.

(The committee thereupon recessed at 12:40 p.m., to reconvene at 2 p.m., the same day.)

Because of the foregoing, the said Committee on Un-American Activities was deprived of answers to pertinent questions propounded to said Peter Seeger relative to the subject matter which, under Public Law 601, section 121, subsection (q) (2) of the 79th Congress, and under House Resolution 5 of the 84th Congress, the said committee was instructed to investigate, and the refusal of the witness to answer the questions, namely:

May I ask you whether or not the Allerton Section was a section of the Communist Party?

Did you take part in this May Day program under the auspices of the music section of the cultural division of the Communist Party?

Did you sing this particular song on the Fourth of July at Wingdale Lodge in New York?

Were you chosen by Mr. Elliott Sullivan to take part in the program on the weekend of July Fourth at Wingdale Lodge?

Did you take part in that performance?

Have you been a member of the Communist Party since 1947?

Will you examine it please and state whether or not that is a photograph of you?

It is noted that the individual mentioned is wearing a military uniform. That was in May of 1952, and the statute of limitations would have run by now as to any offense for the improper wearing of the uniform, and will you tell the committee whether or not you took part in that May Day program wearing a uniform of an American soldier?

Did you also teach at the Jefferson School of Social Science here in the city of New York.

Are you a member of the Communist Party now?

which questions were pertinent to the subject under inquiry, is a violation of the subpoena under which the witness had previously appeared, and his refusal to answer the aforesaid questions deprived your committee of necessary and pertinent testimony and places the said witness in contempt of the House of Representatives of the United States.

SEGER CONVICTED OF U. S. CONTEMPT

NYT 3/30/61-20
Jury finds Folk Singer Is

Guilty of All 10 Counts of
Defiance in Red Hunt

By PHILIP BENGAMIN

Pete Seeger, the folk singer, was convicted of contempt of Congress yesterday by a jury in Federal Court. He was found guilty on all ten counts of an indictment charging him with refusing to answer questions by the House Committee on Un-American Activities.

Mr. Seeger had appeared before the committee Aug. 18, 1955, when it was in New York investigating possible Communist infiltration in the entertainment industry.

The 42-year-old singer could receive up to a year in prison and a \$1,000 fine. He will be sentenced next Tuesday morning at 10:30 A. M. The verdict will be appealed.

The jury, composed of eight men and four women, deliberated for an hour and twenty minutes before bringing in its verdict. Mr. Seeger was continued in \$1,000 bail pending sentence.

Queried on Activities

The indictment was based on his refusal to answer ten questions at the 1955 hearing. The questions concerned alleged membership in the Communist party and participation in various Communist or Communist-front activities.

Mr. Seeger did not specifically invoke any Constitutional amendments as a basis for refusal to answer questions, but he said during a recess yesterday that the First Amendment, which guarantees freedom of speech, was implicit in his refusal.

During the three-day trial before Federal Judge Thomas F. Murphy, Mr. Seeger's attorney, Paul L. Ross, had attempted to cast doubt on the validity of the Congressional committee's investigation of the entertainment industry in New York, since no legislation had resulted from it.

In his charge to the jury yesterday, however, Judge Murphy said he had "determined as a matter of law" that the committee had conducted a valid inquiry and its questions to Mr. Seeger had been pertinent.

New York Times
p. 20

March 30, 1961

One Issue Stressed

Irving Younger, the assistant United States Attorney prosecuting the trial, said in summing up that the only issue was whether Mr. Seeger had been in contempt of Congress by refusing to answer questions.

An unusual feature of the trial was the appearance Tuesday of Representative Francis E. Walter, chairman of the House committee, as a witness. He had been subpoenaed by the defense.

Mr. Seeger did not take the stand. Yesterday Mr. Ross called four persons as character witnesses. They were Dr. Helen Parkhurst, an educator and founder of the Dalton School, a progressive school here; Moses Asch of Folkways Records, for whom Mr. Seeger has recorded songs; the Rev. Gerald Humphrey, a Protestant Episcopal priest from Beacon, N. Y., where Mr. Seeger lives, and Dr. Harold Taylor, former president of Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville.

Two other persons indicted with Mr. Seeger will go on trial soon. They are Elliot Sullivan, 54, an actor, of 2 Peter Cooper Road, and Martin Yarus, an actor known professionally as George Tync, 44, of 514 Central Park West.

Seeger Conviction for Contempt Of Congress Voided in Appeal

**U. S. Court Rules Indictment
Failed to Define Powers
of House Committee**

By EDWARD RANZAL

The conviction a year ago of Pete Seeger, well-known folk singer, for contempt of Congress was unanimously reversed yesterday by the United States Court of Appeals.

The indictment was ordered dismissed. Mr. Seeger, who was sentenced to one year in prison, has been free in \$2,000 bail pending appeal.

The 43-year-old folk singer, who lives near Beacon, N. Y., was charged with having refused to answer questions on Communist infiltration in the field of entertainment during a hearing in 1955 before a subcommittee of the House Un-American Activities Committee.

In reversing the conviction, the court held that the indictment was defective because it failed to define properly the authority of the subcommittee to conduct the hearings.

The court's opinion was written by Judge Irving R. Kaufman; Judge Thomas W. Swann concurred. Judge Leonard P. Moore concurred in a separate opinion in which he held that the Government had failed to prove its case.

'Misleading Statement'

The court found that instead of a "clear, accurate and unambiguous" definition of the subcommittee's authority, the indictment "contained a wholly misleading and incorrect statement of the basis of that authority."

"This not only runs afoul of accepted notions of fair notice, but goes to the very substance of whether or not any crime has been shown," it said.

Judge Kaufman wrote:

"We are not inclined to dismiss lightly claims of Constitutional stature because they are asserted by one who may appear unworthy of sympathy. Once we embark upon shortcuts by creating a category of the 'obviously guilty' whose rights are denied, we run the risk that the circle of the unprotected will grow."

Judge Kaufman said that there could be no doubt that it



Pete Seeger

was the duty of every citizen to help Congress obtain information that it needed to legislate intelligently and effectively. He added:

"When Congress believes that its authority has been flouted by improper behavior of a witness who has refused to give testimony before one of its subcommittees, and has voted that the witness be prosecuted for contempt, it is incumbent upon the courts to apply the sanctions provided by law."

The Issue of Fairness

"The issue then is not only whether Congress, or the prosecutor, or even a judge might believe that the defendant is guilty of contempt; it is whether he has been accused and tried in full compliance with the transcending principles of fairness embodied in our Constitution and protected by our law."

"A defendant, faced with possible loss of liberty, should not, at the commencement of the prosecution, be made to guess whether the inquiring body had power to exact his testimony."

The Government may pursue the case in two ways, if it desires. It can appeal the reversal to the United States Supreme Court or draw a new indictment within a year. Government officials refused to discuss what course they may follow at this time.

New York Times
p. 43-M

May 19, 1962

APRIL - MAY, 1962

New Horizons

FOR YOUTH

IN THIS ISSUE: INTERVIEWS WITH
PETE SEEGER & FRANK WILKINSON

ARTICLE

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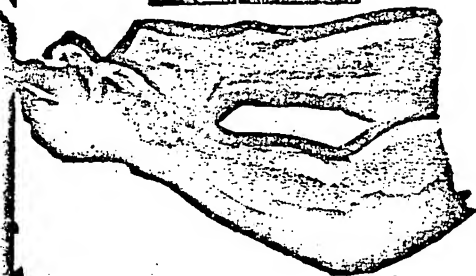
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COMMITTEE ON
UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES

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On Wednesday, March 14, we interviewed Pete Seeger, noted folk singer, and one of the "First Amendment Cases." We present this interview complete and unedited.

Q. You often say that your songs express your politics, but what influences your politics?

First of all I think you ought to understand how I define the word "politics." I'm not a politician; I'm a musician, but it seems to me that any citizen in a democracy should be interested in far more than just his narrow profession. After all, how could you have a democracy, how could people vote if they were ignorant about what was going on in the world? Even the ordinary citizens, no matter what jobs they have, whether it's a low paying job or a high paying job, or if they don't have any job at all; if they vote, theoretically they are supposed to be interested in more than just themselves. They're interested in things that are of national concern; international concern nowadays—nothing is national anymore. And I am no exception, I'm a musician who happens to be interested in every part of the world. No person who is interested in poetry or song could fail to be interested in all kinds of people; rich and poor; people of different races and religious creeds, different beliefs and certainly, of different countries. So if any one wants to find out what my politics are it is easy for them to find out simply by attending one of my programs. I've never tried to pull punches, and if they listen to me one evening they will have a better definition of what I believe in.

Q. As a 1st Amendment case, what do you think are obviously the rights of an artist to perform without reprisals?

Obviously, if you believe in the First Amendment of the Constitution, you believe that people not only have a right to speak their minds but to sing their mind as well, and the obvious intent of HUAC is to put a damper on all expression which they disapprove of, whether speakers, singers, and I suppose you could extend that to actors, painters, photographers too. If this gentleman who is taking photographs of us now, happened to be down in Sen. Eastland's territory, taking pictures of some of the things that Sen. Eastland doesn't want anyone to see, I'm sure that Sen. Eastland would like to take his camera away from him, if he could.

Q. Speaker bans have made news on campuses recently. Could you cite a similar experience of your own?

It occasionally happens. The president of a college in the midwest head that the Student Council wanted me to come and give a concert, and so he went before the Council and said, "Boys, I heard Mr. Seeger sing when he was here last year and I admit

SEEGER:

"I have

that I liked the program and that there was nothing really wrong with it, although I didn't agree with everything in it, but, since then I've had some letters . . ." So he showed the Student Council a batch of letters from the American Legion and so on, and he said, "As you know, our college is not state supported, we have a hard time getting endowments. Right now I'm trying to get more endowments and this is not making my job any easier. If you have him here again, you can be assured that there will be many people who will not contribute to our college, and I urge you not to have Mr. Seeger back." Well the Student Council said that this was an issue of academic freedom, and asked whether they did or did not have the right to have a person come and sing for them. They put up such a fight that finally the president washed his hands of it, and said: "Well, I've done what I could." So the students came and got me. They said, "Look, we're Republicans and Democrats and everything; we're not interested in your politics; we want to hear some songs. And this attitude has been shown by students in many different places, I'm happy to say. Of course I'm kept from some places. There is a ruling on some college campuses that I am not allowed to sing in a college building, period. And for years, I haven't been able to sing on network TV, or get a steady job on radio or television. But perhaps this has been a blessing in disguise. I'm very fortunate because I have the best kind of audience in the world, namely young people throughout the country who would like to hear me sing. And I sure enjoy singing for them.

Q. You've sung songs of peace, civil rights, civil liberties, etc. What connection do you see among these songs?

I'm sorry but you'd have to hear the song to determine that. No two songs treat any subject the same way, whether it's justice or injustice of any sort. Furthermore the same song can mean different things to different people, and increasingly in the last few years I've found that the most powerful statement I can make is simply to ask a pertinent question. Einstein once said that in any research problem the most important step was discovering the right questions to ask. If you can discover the right questions to ask, from then on it's clear sailing, because you know what to try and answer. But until you know the right questions to ask, you flounder. It's as though a person shipwrecked on a raft doesn't know whether to ask for food or directions first. Some of the most important songs I've sung in the last few years have been things like the "Bells of Rimney," which simply say, is there hope for the future? Who

best kind of audience in the ... young people."

robbed the miners say the big bells of Blina. Why so worried, sisters, why say the silver bells of Whye. And another song, which I wrote a few years ago, and which now, to my surprise is climbing up in the top forty, is "Where Have All the Flowers Gone." It also simply asks three questions, such as, "where have all the young men gone?"

Q. What is the major role, or purpose of your art?

The major role of any art is to try to explain life. You don't simply provide fairy tales to titillate and distract one, or to divert one. Rather you try to lift the audience out of their local narrow problems and relate them to much broader problems. Now this is a subtle difference and I wonder if you see what I mean. Take people who have lived all their lives in one little town. They see right and wrong in that town, and they've never been outside that town. But they go to see a play, "Hamlet," "Prince of Denmark," or a play by Brecht, like "The Good Woman of Setzuan," about something going on way over in Asia. And they see right and wrong in these far away places. And if they have any sense as human beings they will relate these problems to those of their own home town. In other words, they are not supposed to forget their problems, but rather to relate them and to learn about them. It is like history. You get a perspective on today by studying yesterday, and you get a clearer idea of what tomorrow may bring by studying what is going on today. Thus, I, as an artist, am simply using the tools at my command—banjos, guitars, melodies, verses—to try to do the same thing. In a larger sense, anyone who has tried to explain something to someone else finds himself needing to use a certain amount of art. Most of the great politicians of the world have been artists. Certainly Lincoln was; he was able to explain difficult points using small stories. Some of the demagogic politicians have been artists too, in a satanic way. But they have known how to capture in one phrase a whole movement,—whether it's Huey Long with his "every man a King," or Hitler and so on. Now let me ask you a question or two,—

Do you feel that a student in college, who has never worked in any industry, who sings about sharecroppers, miners, sailors, cowboys, is only manifesting some form of escapism?

My answer: I feel that they should understand what they are singing and not just be enchanted with the melody or the particular lyrics. College students read about many people and many types of experiences which they will not experience in their lives, or have not yet experienced in their short lives. Thus,

singing about these people, and at the same time being aware of what the song meant to the people who wrote it, adds to the student's knowledge of other human beings.

Seeger—that's a good answer. After all, college students read about the Elizabethans, the Greek and Roman periods, so why shouldn't they sing about what they know. But you're quite right; too often they only sing the words without taking the time to really understand the song, to dig beneath the surface.

Do you think that any one person can sing the songs of the people of the United States? Just think how many different peoples there are, coming from different corners of Europe, Asia, Africa, South America.

My reply: I would think one could. We have in common the fact that we're human beings and too, we're Americans. America is made up of many cultures, and the ideal of our country is one of unifying these cultures without destroying their basic char-



acter. It's also important that we understand what role the songs play in a particular people's lives.

Seeger—I would add one thing. If you want to sing somebody else's song you ought to sing it as well as you can. There is always the danger, particularly if it is from a faraway place or in an idiom you are not sure of. You may make a damned fool of yourself, just by misunderstanding something. I once learned a song from a soldier when I was in the army, about 20 years ago. This soldier was from Brownsville, Texas, and was of Mexican background. He taught me a beautiful little Spanish song, and I sang it around for years until I found out that it was a completely filthy song and couldn't be sung in the presence of anybody. One could likewise say things which were unfair, unrealistic, silly, just by not knowing an idiom well enough. Even pronunciation . . . I've heard English people come over here and try to put on one of our Louisiana Accents, and it sounds just silly. So you ought to make these songs your own unless you can really do it right.